

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05
CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-01
INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04
USIA-06 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07
/117 W

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P R 031500Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1179

INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 915

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EMIN, MNUC, TECH, CM, LY

SUBJ: LIBRAN INTEREST IN POSSIBLE THORIUM DEPOSITS

REF: 75 YAOUNDE 4130

1. PROFESSOR ROBERT WEST (VISITING PROFESSOR FROM FLETCHER SCHOOL AND SPECIALIST IN ENERGY PROBLEMS) AND ECONOFF MET WITH MINISTER OF MINES AND ENERGY ELANGWE FOR TOUR D'HORIZON ON GURC MINING AND ENERGY PLANS WED. 2 MARCH. MINISTER GAVE GENERAL OVERVIEW OF GURC POLICY AND DISCUSSED VARIOUS PROGRAMS. DURING CONVERSATION, DR. WEST PICKED UP ON REFERENCES TO URANIUM, NUCLEAR FUELS AND THE LIBYANS. BASIC INFO PROVIDED BY THE MINISTER AND WEST'S COMMENTS ARE BELOW. WHILE THE HARD INFO IS MINIMAL, THERE APPEARS TO BE POSSIBLE PROBLEM ON CONTROL NUCLEAR MATERIALS.

2. DURING COURSE OF CONVERSATION, THE MINISTER MENTIONED URANIUM DEPOSITS AT POLI, AND POSSIBILITIES NEAR THE CAE BORDER. HE MADE A PASSING REFERENCE TO OTHER NUCLEAR FUELS AND
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MENTIONED AGAIN POLI, THE AREA NEAR THE CAE BORDER AND SOUTHWEST PROVINCE. DR. WEST ASKED IF THORIUM WAS INCLUDED AND THE FIRST TIME THE MINISTER IGNORED THE QUESTION BUT THE SECOND TIME HE ACKNOWLEDGED THORIUM BY A NOD OF THE HEAD. IN DISCUSSING THE DEPOSITS, THE MINISTER CITED THE LIBYANS' INTEREST IN DEVELOPING THE DEPOSITS. SUBSEQUENT TO PRESIDENT AHIDJO'S VISIT TO LIBYA IN OCTOBER 1975 AN AGREEMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT

OF A JOINT LIBYAN-CAMEROONIAN MINING COMPANY WAS SIGNED AND THIS IS TO BE THE VEHICLE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT VENTURE.

3. ACCORDING TO DR. WEST, THE AREAS CITED MIGHT REPEAT MIGHT BE A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF THORIUM. THE LIBYANS (IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HUNGARIANS) ARE MOVING TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HIGH TEMPERATURE GAS REACTOR (HTGR), ONE OF WHOSE PRODUCTS IS WEAPONS GRADE U 235. THE PORBLEM FOR THE LIBYANS AND HUNGARIANS IS TO LOCATE AN UNCONTROLLED (NOT UNDER INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS) SOURCE OF THORIUM. NOTE: DR. WEST IS AN EXPERT IN THE FIELD, AND HIS ASSISTANT IS MR. GEZA SZUTOVY, SON OF ANTOINE SZUTOVY. ANTOINE SZUTOVY IS A HUNGARIAN SPECIALIST IN THE FIELD NOW WORKING AS TECHNICAL ADVISOR TO THE LIBYAN GOVT. GEZA SZUTOVY DEFECTED TO THE US AND IS CURRENTLY PROFESSOR WEST'S ASSISTANT. FATHER AND SON CONTINUE TO CORRESPOND. THIS INFO IS TO SHOW BASIS WEST'S FAMILIARITY THE SUBJECT. IN HIS OPINION, THE LIBYANS MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO LOCATE MONAZITE (THP04) IN CAMEROON AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF THORIUM NOT SUBJECT INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS. THE MINISTER STATED THAT A LIBYAN DELEGATION IS DUE TO COME TO CAMEROON IN THE FUTURE TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR A JOINT MINING OPERATION, INDICATING URANIUM AS THE SUBJECT OF INTEREST, NOT THORIUM, ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED PRESENCE OTHER NUCLEAR FUELS AND THORIUM MIGHT BE ASSOCIATED WITH URANIUM DEPOSITS.

4. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT (A) CAMEROON IS NOT SIGNATORY TO NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, (B) CAMEROON IS ALSO SOURCE OF ILMENITE AND RUTILE, WITH WHICH MONAZITE IS ASSOCIATED, (C) GURC WANTS LIBYAN MONEY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND (D) IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT GURC OFFICIALS HAVE LITTLE
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KNOWLEDGE OF HTGR TECHNOLOGY AND DANGERS INVOLVED IF LIBYANS EXPLOITED THORIUM DEPOSITS FOR PROPOSED HTGR IN LIBYA.

5. DR. WEST GAVE ECON AND POL OFFICERS A BRIEF IDEA OF WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ATTEMPTING TO PURSUE MATTER IN LOW KEY MANNER LOCALLY, BUT SUGGESTED THAT WE REQUEST A GEOLOGIST VISIT TO SEE AREAS AND TALK WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN BETTER IDEA OF POSSIBILITIES.

6. CAMEROON IS KNOWN TO HAVE SUBSTANTIAL DEPOSITS OF URANIUM NEAR POLI, AND TRACES NEAR THE CAE BORDER, BUT THERE IS NO KNOWN URANIUM IN THE SOUTHWEST AREA CITED BY THE MINISTER AS A POSSIBLE AREA OF INTEREST. HOWEVER, SOUTHWEST PROVINCE POTENTIAL SOURCE OF MONAZITE WHICH COULD BE DREDGED AND PANNED FROM ALLUVIAL DEPOSITS. FYI. POLITICAL OFFICER NOTICED A DREDGE ABOUT HALF MILE OFF SHORE IN VICTORIA ON FEB 20. EACH OF THE AREAS, FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, HOWEVER, COULD BE CONSIDERED AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF THORIUM. UTAH INTERNATIONAL CURRENTLY PROSPECTING IN NORTH AND WE WILL ATTEMPT CONTACT

THEM EARLY APRIL WHEN EMB OFFICERS WILL BE IN GAROUA.

7. EMBASSY WILL PURSUE MATTER IN QUIET MANNER, BUT REQUEST GUIDANCE FROM WASHINGTON AS TO HOW TO HANDLE. THIS CABLE IS BY NATURE FRAGMENTARY DUE OUR UNFAMILIARITY SUBJECT AND DESIRE NOT CAUSE A STIR IF THERE NO REASON FOR CONCERN. HOWEVER, A NEW SITUATION MAY BE DEVELOPING AND WE WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE, ESPECIALLY IF SERVICES PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGIST OR OTHER EXPERTS REQUIRED.

8. ADVISE.
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